

ITC Tank Fire Transition Plan

Incident Overview:

On March 17, 2019, an aboveground storage tank containing Naphtha, caught fire at the Intercontinental Terminal Company (ITC), LLC facility in Deer Park Texas. The ITC facility consists of fifteen 80,000-barrel capacity aboveground storage tanks containing petroleum products including Naphtha, Xylene, Toluene, Benzene, Gasoline Blendstock, and Base Oil. Eleven of the fifteen aboveground storage tanks on site were involved in the fire, resulting in the release of contaminants into the atmosphere, as well discharging the some of the contents of the tanks to drainage pathways. Firefighting water and foam potentially containing petroleum products were released from an outfall due to accumulation of water from firefighting efforts. Various firefighting organizations assisted in putting out the fire utilizing a variety of firefighting foams.

A partial breach of the tank farm containment wall on the northeast side near Tank 80-7 occurred at approximately 12:00 pm on March 22, 2019, to the ditched area along Tidal Road and into Tucker Bayou. Additional boom was placed along the Tidal Road ditch leading to Tucker Bayou and Buffalo Bayou (Houston Ship Channel).

At approximately 3:40 pm on March 22, 2019, three tanks reignited. The fire spread from the containment area through the breached containment wall into the ditch along Tidal Road. Foam was applied to the tanks and the ditch to extinguish the fire.

During and after the fire and the breach of the secondary containment, several readings of benzene above 1.0 ppm were detected along the ship channel (highest was 16.5 near National Tank Services) by the various entities conducting air monitoring through the afternoon and night. .

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) Captain of the Port is restricting vessel traffic on the Ship Channel, but continues to keep the Ship Channel under controlled conditions through March 26, 2019, with traffic during the daytime only. Decontamination vessels are being positioned to help ships that may have residue on the hulls.

Due to the initial fires and subsequent releases, shelters in place occurred throughout the week of March 17, 2019.

Response Activities:

Tank Farm:

Hand held air monitoring, as well as the EPA Trace Atmosphere Gas Analyzer (TAGA) bus and Airborne Spectral Photometric Environmental Collection Technology (ASPECT) plane are currently being used to monitor the air during the removal of the remaining product from the tanks in the tank farm. EPA is also conducting surface water sampling each day while there is a continuous threat of a significant release from the tank farm.

Product Recovery from the Water:

The water runoff from fighting the tank farm fire and the disastrous failure of the secondary containment discharged tens of thousands of barrels of material into Tidal Road Ditch to Tucker Bayou, which empties into the Houston Ship Channel. The current response activities involve collecting, recovering and disposing of the material from the surface water, as well as, any shoreline cleanup. EPA has developed an Interagency Agreement with the USCG to assist in this effort.

Oversight Transition to State of Texas

Pumping of residual fluids from damaged and remaining tanks in the tank farm continue, with transfer to other secure facility tanks. Aboveground tanks receiving residual fluids from the damaged tank farm should be maintained, inspected, and kept up-to-date under industry standards such as API 653 or STI SP001. When the tanks in the incident tank farm have been left with only a residual amount, the risk of a large catastrophic fire is significantly diminished, high levels of hazardous vapors and a substantial offsite discharge are significantly diminished, EPA will be able to transition the oversight and direction of activities at the tank farm, Tidal Road Ditch, and Tucker Ditch over to the State of Texas. The current projection clearing the material from the tanks in the tank farm is, April 21, 2019.

If the product recovery operations extend beyond the transition of the Tank Farm operations, EPA will transfer Federal On-Scene Coordinator authority for this incident to the USCG to complete the water activities. The current projection for completing the collection, recovery and disposal of the material from the surface water, as well as, any shoreline cleanup is April 27, 2019.